



Offering support and understanding to bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

The “Firsts”

by Kaimana L.

Still can't believe another year has gone by and our precious son Angelo Patrick Kaimana will be 9 years old on the 1st of January. So the first has a special meaning for us because every year on the very first day of the the year, for the last 8 years we have gotten to celebrate Angelo's birthday, even though it is definitely bittersweet.

The “first” Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving Christmas, their 1st birthday, etc. (you get the picture). All of these days just keep rolling in, without any respect or consideration for how much we are still grieving. These holidays and special events can be quite difficult when your/our loss is so new and fresh and our heart is still very much like an open wound.

For me, I wanted to honor Angelo in everything we did, and we still bought him gifts (and still do), or made him Easter baskets, and little Christmas trees, which we would (and continue to) take up to the cemetery to leave at his grave. For me all these things helped, and still help me, to not only remember our most beautiful son, but have helped me through the grieving process. It's my way of dealing with and helping me/us (our family) with the grief that we felt and sometimes still feel after losing a very important part of our family so suddenly.

If you cremated your child or weren't able to because of a miscarriage, create a shrine or place in your home where you can make as a place of honor for your baby, and you can bring things that help you to honor and remember your baby with special things, if that is what will help you get through the “firsts.”

For Angelo's first birthday, we had a huge party with all our family, friends, midwives, and even Auntie Pat (Schwiebert) came to honor him. We all went around and shared something about him and how (even though he was here for a short time), much he had touched our hearts and changed our lives forever. I believe God gave me a hula to dance to

honor our son that day and it was truly such a beautiful event that my family and I will never forget, and which was such a big part of our healing.

One of the main reasons I did these things especially in the beginning, was because so many people (friends and family included) just wanted me to get over it (like I'd only had the flu or a cold or something). They didn't want to talk about Angelo anymore and when I tried to talk to them (which in the beginning I still cried all the time) they would say things that would make me feel worse. So I realized that I had to do what I felt was right for me and my family and all these things I did to honor him felt so right and made me feel better.

For the first holiday events, it might be easier to just have a quiet holiday with you and your baby's other parent. Go to the beach with just the two of you or someplace that brings you comfort. You don't have to pretend for everyone that you're happy when you're not. I remember feeling almost pressured to go to a family members little girl's birthday party less than a month after my son had died. There were lots of little babies there and it was so hard. I wished I hadn't let family make me feel like I had to go. When you're ready you will know. I'm not saying it won't be hard, but let it be your decision, not somebody else's.

I thank God for our annual Christmas remembrance ceremony where we can all gather at a beautiful place to not only remember and honor our children but be in a safe place where it's OK to cry, (especially if it's the “first” Christmas without your little one) even though it's the holidays and everyone wants you to be “happy.”

I pray for all of you who will be going through your “firsts” this year. Hang in there, with time and the love you have for your partner, it will get a little better every day. Do what you feel will be best for you and don't worry about pleasing others in spite of your own feelings. Help each other, and be there

continued

What is Brief Encounters?

Brief Encounters is a non-profit, non-sectarian support group for parents whose babies have died before, during, or after birth. At informal, mutually supportive meetings and through our monthly newsletter and Web site, bereaved parents and their families share their stories, discuss issues that arise from pregnancy and infant loss, and remember their children. Through reading, talking and listening, we learn what grief is—and how, through understanding and caring, we heal.

Firsts

Excerpted from *Strong and Tender* by Pat Schwiebert RN

The first year after your baby's death will be filled with "first times" that never were, e.g. first Christmas, first birthday, first trip to the beach, first autumn, etc. Each one of these days is a potential occasion for renewed sadness, anger, resentment or anxiety. Even if you are personally not upset by the arrival of these occasions, your partner may well be affected, and you will become involved by default, whether you want to or not. Many people who have experienced grief say that the days leading up to a holiday are generally more difficult than the day itself. It will be helpful if you can keep these first days in mind and mention them to your partner before she mentions them to you.

You may decide that it would be good for the two of you to get away for a while, take a trip, enjoy a change of scenery, take a vacation from grief. Indeed, this may be just what you need. But before you make too many plans, take time to think about all the implications of such a venture. Leaving home may generate anxiety at a time when you most need the comfort of your own familiar surroundings. If you do go away, you may soon find yourselves wanting to turn around and come home.

Don't be surprised if you find yourself needing to take your baby's pictures or other precious memorabilia with you, because of your anxiety about being separated from them.

The most important thing to keep in mind as you travel this road of grief is that there are no guarantees, no set time schedules. And being strong doesn't mean not allowing yourself to experience emotions. Just because today is a good day, don't assume that tomorrow will be as satisfactory. Grief has many hills and valleys and the more you can just ride along, taking things as they come, the easier it will be for you. Trust that it will get better. Trust that you and your partner will learn and grow from this experience. And even after things get better and life looks sweeter, there will be times when your tender heart will remember the baby that too quickly passed through your life. *

The "Firsts"

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for one another during the first year of the "firsts." Only you two know what it's like to lose your baby and hopefully you will know or try and find out what will comfort each other.

I also want to thank Raina for all her years as editor of our Brief Encounters newsletter. You have helped me so much through these years, and especially almost 9 years ago when I was going through my "firsts" and would wait at the mailbox for my next newsletter to help me get through the next month. You have helped all of us so much when you yourself were going through your own grief and I will always love you for that! Your words of wisdom will be missed and we wish you the best in all your endeavors! *

In loving memory of our son Angelo Patrick Kaimana - January 1st, 2003 - January 12th, 2003, who will live in our hearts forever and always be loved by his mama, papa, and sisters Kiana, Karissa, and Sierra.



Holiday Cards Available

Holidays are difficult and some of your friends may not have received word of your baby's death. Sending a holiday card with information of your baby's death may be helpful to you. Grief Watch has cards to help you let others know of your sorrow. Visit griefwatch.com for examples of what is available.

Volunteers Needed for Newsletter and Web Site

Web Site Manager Needed

Brief Encounters is looking for a volunteer to maintain the group's Web site. The site is often a bereaved parent's first contact with the group and the support we have to offer them. This position includes maintenance and upgrades to the site, currently hosted on a WordPress blog system, as well as posting updates to the site, such as event notices and newsletters. Web experience would be helpful, but is not required. This position works with Pat and the newsletter editor. If interested, please contact Pat at pat@tearsoup.com to discuss the specifics. Thank you.

Newsletter Editor Needed

Brief Encounters is looking for a volunteer to edit this newsletter. Editing and layout experience/skills are a plus, but not required. This position works with Pat, the Web site manager, the treasurer and the database manager. If you are interested in volunteering for this position, which provides an important support service to our families, please contact Pat at pat@tearsoup.com to discuss the specifics. **We need someone to start with the January 2012 issue.** Thank you.

Resources

Movies That Bereaved Parents May Choose to Avoid

We have compiled a list of movies that bereaved parents and families may choose to avoid due to potentially upsetting subject matter relating to pregnancy loss or the death of a child. If you have additions to this list, please send them to the editor at brief_encounters_news@yahoo.com.

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| 1408 (2007) | Joy Luck Club, The (1993) |
| Accidental Tourist, The (1988) | Jude (1996) |
| Agnes of God (1985) | Junebug (2005) |
| AI: Artificial Intelligence (2001) | Juno (2007) |
| Alien 3 (1992) | Kingdom of Heaven (2005) |
| Alien 4 (1997) | Knocked Up (2007) |
| Almost Romeo (2005) | March of the Penguins (2005) |
| Astro Boy (2009) | Matador, The (2006) |
| Astronaut's Wife, The (1999) | Message in a Bottle (1999) |
| Baby Mama (2008) | Moonlight Mile (2002) |
| Beloved (1998) | Music Within (2007) |
| Blood Diamond (2006) | My Girl (1991) |
| Bridge to Terabithia (2007) | Mystic River (2003) |
| Butterfly Effect, The (2004) | Pan's Labyrinth (2006) |
| Candy (2006) | Paradise (1991) |
| Children of Men (2006) | Pay it Forward (2000) |
| Cider House Rules, The (1999) | Perfume: The Story of a Murderer (2006) |
| City Hall (1996) | Quigley Down Under (1990) |
| Constant Gardener, The (2005) | Rabbit Hole (2010) |
| Crash (2005) | Ray (2004) |
| Cry in the Dark, A (1988) | Reservation Road (2007) |
| Dark, The (2005) | Saving Private Ryan (1998) |
| Deep End of the Ocean (1999) | Sex and Lucia (2002) |
| Devil's Advocate, The (1997) | She's Having a Baby (1988) |
| Door in the Floor, The (2004) | Sixth Sense, The (1999) |
| Eastern Promises (2007) | Sleepy Hollow (1999) |
| Elizabeth (1998) | Slingblade (1996) |
| Frida (2002) | Smilla's Sense of Snow (1997) |
| Godsend (2004) | Sophie's Choice (1982) |
| Gone Baby Gone (2007) | Sweet Hereafter, The (1997) |
| Hand That Rocks the Cradle (1992) | Syriana (2005) |
| High Fidelity (2000) | Tess (1980) |
| Hours, The (2002) | Then She Found Me (2008) |
| I. Robot (2004) | Up (2009) |
| Immediate Family (1989) | Walk the Line (2005) |
| Immortal Beloved (1994) | Whale Rider (2003) |
| In the Bedroom (2001) | What Dreams May Come (1998) |
| Ironweed (1987) | Waitress (2007) |
| | World According to Garp, The (1982) |

Memorial Sites & Holiday Ceremony

The Angel of Hope Statue is located in River View Cemetery, 300 SW Taylors Ferry Rd., Portland (riverviewcemetery.org). Inspired by the book *The Christmas Box*, in which a woman mourns the loss of her child at the base of an angel monument (thechristmasboxhouse.org/statue.html). **Each year, a candlelight memorial service is held simultaneously at every Angel of Hope statue around the country on the second Sunday in December.** For information, call (503) 246-4251.

Ben's Bench is on the Wildwood Trail between Firelane 13 (BPA Road) & Firelane 15. Park at the Germantown or Newton Rd. Trailheads and walk NW (away from the city) towards Newberry Rd. There is also parking at Newberry Rd. Trailhead, walking East towards the city. In memory of Benjamin Collins, born and died 2/14/02, by his mother Lydia Collins.

A **Memorial Bench** is located in the Hoyt Arboretum. Park in the upper parking lot across from the Vietnam Memorial. Walk up the hill to the first trail on the right, Kingston. Walk it to Maple Trail. Turn left on Hawthorn. The bench is on the right, with a sign at its base.

A **Butterfly Sculpture** in the Providence Newberg Medical Center's Healing Garden at 1001 Providence Drive, Newberg, is meant to be a place of reflection, comfort and hope for parents who have lost a child at any age or stage of pregnancy. Installed by the Nora Madelyn Fund for Infant and Child Loss (noramadelyn.org), in memory of Nora Madelyn (7/24/02-7/24/02.)

Counselor Referrals

Not all counselors are familiar with the issues that parents face after the death of their baby or during infertility treatment. If you feel like you would like to talk with a counselor, listed below are the names of persons Brief Encounters highly recommends:

- * Paula Acker, LCSW, (503) 940-5777
- * Gaby Donnell, LCSW, (503) 287-2295
- * Britta Dinsmore, LCSW (503) 913-4791
- * Audrianna J. Gurr, MS, NCC, (503) 475-4005
- * Jillian Romm RN, LCSW (503) 226-6002
- * Brynna Sibilla, LCSW (503) 280-1101
- * Jennifer Stock (503) 242-1558
- * The Dougy Center (for bereaved siblings) (503) 775-5683

Support Between Meetings

Do you need to talk but don't want to wait until the next group meeting? Here are some friends who are willing to talk—or just listen. You may be looking to connect with someone who has experienced similar circumstances in his or her loss(es.) These volunteers welcome your contact by phone or e-mail. Please put "Brief Encounters" in the message line of your e-mail so that our volunteers will be sure to read your message. If you are interested in being listed as a support person, or wish to have your name removed, please contact the editor.

Nancy (bump7911@comcast.net or 503-666-1998) had a miscarriage at 11.5 weeks (8/99) and delivered a full term son, Nicolas (9/13/00), who died 2 months and 8 days later (11/21/00). Nicolas had severe brain damage due to complications during labor. Nancy and Don have one living son, Alex (1994).

Dominique (503-281-6970 or ddallmayr@yahoo.com) adopted a son after a full term stillbirth.

Karin (kersgrim@msn.com) lost her son, stillborn at full term without explanation (9/94), experienced two miscarriages, and a pregnancy interruption of a son, at 23 weeks, who had Trisomy 18. Karen has two living children.

Shannon (adamshannon75@q.com) lost her daughter, Heather Renee, stillborn due to an intrauterine infection and premature birth. She has experienced a successful subsequent pregnancy.

Rachel (503-287-2628) has had 3 early miscarriages and lost twins at 21.5 weeks due to premature labor in January 2004. She has 2 living children.

Elizabeth (503-648-1458 or odekirk_hash@yahoo.com) lost a child at 6.5 months gestation after trying to conceive for 7 years and using IVF. She has since adopted a girl.

Gayle (503-661-0764) had a son who was stillborn after a ruptured cord during labor at 34 weeks, lost a son at 17 weeks, and experienced four early pregnancy losses. She has two living children, a son ('96) and a daughter ('01).

Ken (503-761-3816, 503-516-2761 cell) had a son, Mitchell, who died from heart failure ('00). He has two living sons, Mason and Marshall.

Terri (ststrauss@comcast.net) lost her son, stillborn without explanation at 36 weeks. She has three living children (Delanie 3/99 and Genna & Cara 5/02).

Sarah (scellwood@yahoo.com) lost her daughter, Audrey, stillborn at 38.5 weeks in January 2008 due to an umbilical cord incident. She has one living daughter.

Joanie (miniquilter79@hotmail.com) had a daughter, Melissa Catherine, who died of SIDS at 6 weeks of age. She has 3 living children.

Maura (cioeta@comcast.net) lost her son, stillborn at full term without explanation (6/96). She has two healthy children (Anthony, 1/98) and (Annamarie, 4/01). Due to serious high blood pressure at the end of her last pregnancy, which caused a stressful delivery, she plans to have no more children.

Charlotte (503-513-5448) had a son who died at one month of a heart defect. She has also experienced four early pregnancy losses, infertility issues, and a successful subsequent pregnancy.

Carol (carolyork@frontier.com) experienced a miscarriage (7/96) and the loss of a son, stillborn due to a cord accident (3/00). She has two living children (9/97 and 6/01).

Shannon (djzela@yahoo.com) lost her daughter, Dorothy Raine (6/1/07), full term (39 weeks) during labor due to an umbilical cord incident. She and her husband have a son, born 11/08.

Brief Encounters Meetings

Our support group meetings are a safe place to talk about your child, your loss and your grief. You are welcome to share, or just listen. A facilitator guides the meeting. For more information or directions, please call (503) 699-8006.

Parents of Infant Loss and Pregnancy Loss, Including Early Pregnancy Loss

We ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00 pm

Portland: Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave.

Westside Meeting!

Meets the third Monday of each month, 7:00 pm

Beaverton: Fire Station #60, 8585 NW Johnson St.

E-mail Caroline (cfalcone@mail.com) or Dominique (ddallmayr@yahoo.com) with questions.

Parents of Pregnancy Interruption Due to Medical Reasons

We ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00 pm

Portland: Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave.

Parents of Subsequent Pregnancies and Adoptions & Parents Trying to Conceive

Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00 pm

Portland: Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave.

Fertility & Adoption Support Group

We ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

This group is exclusively for women who are trying to conceive their first, second or more child. Women who have not experienced a loss are also welcome. This group offers a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where you can have a sense of not being alone and receive encouragement, have a chance to express what the experience is like, share what we have learned about fertility and ourselves, and receive positive support. Questions? Contact Anne at (503) 570-3498 or annehend@aol.com.

Meets the first Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm

Portland: Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave.

Brief Encounters

Metanoia Peace Community

United Methodist Church

2116 NE 18th Ave.

Portland, OR 97212

Message Line: Support, Questions

(503) 699-8006 (Spanish line: 503-972-3376)

Web site

briefencounters.org

Mailing List: Add or Drop, or Address Changes

megan.k.wright@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Article Submissions, Comments

brief_encounters_news@yahoo.com

